

## THEME 2 IN 'WHAT'S EATING GILBERT GRAPE?': THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCEPTANCE / RESPECT



- What is acceptance and how does it apply to us for this film study?
  - Gilbert respected by Mr Lamson and Becky, but not his family or Mrs Betty Carver
  - Acceptance is treating people as equals
- Who is respected in the film and who isn't?
- What do the characters need to accept?
  - Change
  - People need to respect difference and what others really are like on the inside
- What does the audience need to accept? Does this film teach us anything?
  - That we can't choose our families and they're important no matter how they make you feel.
  - People need to love and accept themselves (e.g: Gilbert)
  - That you must take what life throws at you and make the most of it, rather than dwell on the 'what ifs'
  - That it's important to express our feelings
  - That families can be less than ideal but we love them for what they are
  - People aren't always what they seem – don't judge a book by its cover
  - That everyone has feelings and should not be treated otherwise
- People have said of this film that "Viewers start off laughing at Momma, but by the end, they understand, and they're not laughing anymore." Do you agree or disagree?
  - Most agreed. 'At the start she's kind of a joke but in the end you just feel sorry for her and see how she's trapped.'
  - They understand why she was led to obesity – husband's suicide and Arnie's situation.
  - Yes because she is a good person on the inside
- How accepting of their lives and other people are the following characters in the film? What kinds of things do they need to accept?
  - Gilbert: He is not his father, he is his own person who can live his life. Momma's size. Things change and always will.
  - Becky Very accepting: "I like it. It's my life" shows acceptance.
  - Momma? Needs to accept her husband's death.
  - Arnie?

- Ellen?
- Amy?

**Discuss the following statements. You may agree or disagree with them. Back yourself with evidence**

1. A lack of acceptance of her husband's death on Bonnie Grape's part has led to her obesity.
2. Gilbert needs to accept that he has a responsibility to his family and stop moping around.
  - Most disagreed with this. He's not in a good place for most of the film, but tries hard.
3. Becky is the most accepting character in the film.
  - Yes, she sees things as they are. She brings Gilbert out of his shell.
4. Arnie forgives Gilbert for hitting him because he accepts that Gilbert has faults.
  - Yes, but because he knows how much Gilbert loves and protects him. No, he forgives him because he is his brother.
5. Becky does not judge the small town of Endora – she accepts it for what it is.
  - Yes. She embraces the town's best features. She says 'It's as good a place as any other'
6. Endora is accepting of difference. In what ways? (Arnie, Momma, Gilbert, affairs)
  - Not of Momma!
7. This film is a perfect example of why people in society need to accept each other.
  - People laughed at Momma because they couldn't understand or accept her.
8. Gilbert learns to accept and respect his mother in the film.
  - Evidence of this in their talk at the end of the film.
  - He finally introduces Becky to Momma

These are rough notes that I will type up once I've received your feedback – either by class discussion or just your own notes on these sheets. Food Wednesday tomorrow! Hooray!